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Letter dated 6 August 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a summary of losses sustained by the health sector in the Syrian Arab Republic in the course of the current events that are being caused by the operations of the armed terrorist groups and the imposition of illegal and unilateral measures by certain States and regional entities.

The health sector in Syria, its humanitarian character notwithstanding, is one of the main sectors in which heavy losses have been sustained from the terrorist acts to which the country is being subjected. It is one of the sectors to be most strongly underpinned by the State, with the aim of providing the Syrian people and other residents in the country with the highest standard of health service free of charge or at nominal cost.

Those major losses have been sustained as a result of the systematic and continual attacks, the number of which has escalated over the past two months in particular, that the terrorist groups have carried out on hospitals and health centres, many of which have been rendered non-operational. In the course of those attacks, many doctors and health sector workers were targeted and killed, abducted, raped and terrorized. Ambulances and their crews have been targeted, as have even persons working in the humanitarian field, both national and international personnel, who were attempting to assist the civilians that the armed terrorist groups were using as human shields. The terrorist groups have stolen medication from hospitals, health centres and pharmaceutical warehouses, thus depriving needy civilians in order to treat the armed men. What the gangs were unable to steal, they destroyed.

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What is so unfortunate is that those and other crimes are perpetrated under the protection and with the political and media backing of well-known regional States and groups, whose media fabricate reports that are directed towards the international parties, with a view to inverting the facts. International organizations and institutions subsequently adopt those fabricated reports and present them as incontrovertible truths, whereas the aim of those reports is to encourage those gangs to continue to commit their crimes.

On 25 July 2012, armed terrorist groups targeted the headquarters of the Aleppo governorate emergency services and stole 16 ambulances in addition to a large number of emergency and first aid kits that were in the building.

The numbers set forth below summarize the damage that has been caused in the health sector by attacks since events began, to 22 July 2012. They do not include human losses, or the losses sustained as a result of the most recent crime in Aleppo that is referred to above. It should be noted that losses have risen in the past six weeks as the pace of the foreign-supported and financed terrorism directed against Syria has escalated.

1. Number of hospitals damaged:

A total of 35 hospitals have been damaged, of which 11 were damaged between 7 June and 22 July 2012. Of those, 10 were put out of service, including the hospitals in Manbij and Al Bab, the I'zaz hospital in Aleppo, the National, Qusayr and Nu'aimi hospitals in Homs governorate, the Haffah hospital in Ladhiqiyah, and the Assad and Furat hospitals in Dayr al-Zawr governorate.

2. Number of health centres damaged:

A total of 132 health centres have been damaged, of which 30 have been put out of service; 18 in the past six weeks, as follows:

(a) Qunaytirah governorate: the natural childbirth centre in Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, the Al-Hajar Al-Aswad centre, the Sabinah centre, the fourth health district centre and the health district clinic;

(b) Dayr al-Zawr governorate: the Ayyash health centre, the general clinics, the health institute, the natural childbirth centre and the fourth health district centre;

(c) Ladhiqiyah governorate: the Haffah centre;

(d) Homs governorate: the Jubb al-Jandali centre, the Bayyadah general clinics, the Talbisah general clinics, the Bab al-Durayb general clinics, the Khalidiyah centre, the Salamah centre, the Qusayr general clinics, the Bab al-Durayb centre, the Dab'ah centre, the Rastan health region centre, the Karm al-Zaytun centre, the Dayr Ba'albah north centre and the Dayr Ba'albah south centre;

(e) Damascus governorate: the Al-Qa'ah centre;

(f) Aleppo governorate: the Salahaddin centre, the Dayr Jamal centre, the Jarabulus centre and the Afrin health area centre;

(g) Number of ambulances, mobile vaccination units and hospital and health centre supply vehicles targeted and damaged: 227.

It should be noted that, all those attacks notwithstanding, the Ministry of Health is continually repairing and re-equipping the damaged sections of hospitals

and health centres and repairing ambulances, under the conditions that we have described above.

The unilateral and inhumane economic sanctions that are being imposed by certain States and regional entities have had a direct impact on the health sector, causing foreign exchange rates to rise and making it difficult to carry out currency exchanges because of the sanctions imposed on the banking sector and, in particular, on the Central Bank of Syria, making it difficult for the Ministry of Health to conclude contracts and obtain medication and medical necessities or spare parts and replacements for much of the medical equipment used in hospitals and health centres. The Syrian pharmaceutical industry, which produces some 93 per cent of all medication for the local market, is also facing difficulties, for the same reasons, in gaining access to the raw materials necessary for making medication.

The targeting of the oil sector has affected the electricity supply, causing frequent and lengthy electricity cuts in many regions and a severe fuel shortage, which has affected the equipment used to refrigerate medication and children's vaccines. Patients' lives are directly put at risk by the curtailing of medical services in certain hospitals and health centres, and the equipment needed for critical patient care is rendered inoperable by of lack of fuel.

Furthermore, as part of the economic siege, the European Investment Bank has withdrawn funding for health-care projects that were being carried out or were in the course of preparation. In particular, work has been halted on eight hospitals in various governorates, the central medical research centre and a project for the development and modernization of the health sector in Syria.

We should also like to note that 25 pharmaceutical factories in the governorates of Homs, Aleppo and Rif Dimashq have been forced to completely cease production of local medications because they and their staff have been directly targeted by the armed groups.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17 (a), 19 and 69.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative